

**Town of Groton, Connecticut**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Town Council Public Safety Committee**

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Wednesday, August 19, 2015      6:00 PM      Town Hall Annex – Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

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1.      CALL TO ORDER

Rich Moravsik, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

2.      ROLL CALL

Present at the meeting were Public Safety Committee members Rich Moravsik, Chair, Dean Antipas, Joe de la Cruz, and Harry Watson. Chairman Moravsik declared a quorum. Also present were Mayor Rita M. Schmidt and Patrice Granatosky, members *ex officio*, as well as Alan Ackley, President of the Poquonnock Bridge Fire District Board of Directors, and many other members of the Groton public safety community.

3.      CALENDAR & COMMUNICATIONS

Acceptance of the July 15, 2015 minutes was moved, seconded, and approved unanimously.

4.      UNFINISHED BUSINESS

No unfinished business was raised.

5.      NEW BUSINESS

2015-0199      Emergency Medical Services for R-1 and Ambulance Service

Chairman Moravsik discussed two related items of concern: (1) his review of operation and finance records of the Groton Ambulance Association (“GAA”) in light of recent complaints about missed and late calls, and (2) the Town of Groton’s obligation pursuant to General Statutes § 19a-181b to establish a local emergency medical services plan.

Chairman Moravsik noted that issues concerning GAA’s performance were discussed at this committee’s July 15 meeting. He noted an improvement in how GAA fills out its shifts, but he finds the number of openings still unacceptable. He further

noted that GAA's revenues and expenses tracked each other closely, which he found unreasonable. He particularly found salaries exceeding \$100,000 when the GAA's deficit was \$281,000 unreasonable. Chairman Moravsik did point out, however, that there were no complaints about GAA's service in and of itself, but only its organization of those services.

As for establishing a local emergency medical services plan, Chairman Moravsik further noted that while no decision or recommendation has yet been made, information concerning potential EMS providers' operations and finances has already been elicited and reviewed during the 45-day period from July 9 through August 23. This information has led Chairman Moravsik to question the ability of GAA to provide adequate R-1 (First responder) services. The Town's options, then, are: (1) to do nothing; (2) request that GAA improve its operations and performance; (3) contract with another R-1 provider; or (4) provide R-1 services itself. At this time, however, he will make no recommendation to this committee until after he speaks with the Department of Public Health some time in early September.

Chairman Moravsik distributed two draft R-1 service agreements between the Town and two fire districts (see attached). The first draft agreement, with the Poquonnock Bridge Fire District ("PBFD"), designates PBFD as the basic ambulance provider within PBFD's Primary Service Area ("PSA"). The second draft agreement, with the Mystic Fire District ("MFD"), designates MFD as the basic ambulance provider within the Mystic Fire District. On August 13 Chairman Moravsik presented the outline of an Alternative Local Emergency Medical Services Plan to the PBFD Board of Directors, including the process for approval of such a plan by the Town (see attached). The Board voted unanimously to enter into discussions with the Town to formulate a local emergency medical services plan, to include an agreement that fees for services provided will be used to reduce the district's mill rate (see attached). Chairman Moravsik noted that the draft agreements, his presentation, and the PBFD Board's vote to enter into negotiations with the Town is merely a starting point for further discussion, and not necessarily an indication that this is how the this issue will be handled.

Councilor Watson thought that all this is out of line with the original referral to this committee, that we are moving too far, too fast, and that this issue should be handled at the Committee of the Whole, if not the Council itself. Councilors Granatosky and Antipas expressed similar sentiments. Councilor de la Cruz expressed support for the direction Chairman Moravsik was taking. Chairman Moravsik responded that this was all just fact-finding, and in any event, he will request that all the fire districts submit their bids just as PBFD has done.

There followed a general discussion about the outline of the process, including whether there was a short-term need for the Town to enter into one or more contracts for R-1 (First responder) services while considering a more comprehensive local emergency medical services plan following more lengthy investigation and deliberation.

It was moved by Councilor de la Cruz, seconded by Councilor Antipas, to submit a generic agreement for R-1 (First responder) services to the Town Council for its consideration. This motion passed unanimously. Chairman Moravsik stated he would have the Town Attorney review the generic agreement.

Tim Law, President of GAA, asked to be heard. Mr. Law stated he was very disappointed in how information of GAA was being solicited. Specifically, he expressed concern that information about GAA that this committee was using did not originate from GAA itself but from some unknown source on the internet. Mr. Law further expressed concern that both GAA and Mystic River Ambulance were being left out of this process and that the Town Council never began soliciting bids. Chairman Moravsik denied this, stating that everyone had an opportunity to develop a plan. He emphasized that the discussion needed a starting point, hence the PBFD plan. Mr. Law expressed concern that GAA was being asked to develop a plan according to, and to compete with, PBFD's standards and capacity.

There followed a discussion about service statistics over the last month, especially the dispute about the meaning of "delayed" and "missed" calls.

Chairman Moravsik again noted that while this committee is still reviewing this matter, because of the Town's obligation under General Statutes § 19a-181b, we need to approve an agreement with PBFD for R-1 (First responder) services, and not with GAA, because the Town Manager does not believe that GAA is capable of providing the level of service needed. Chairman Moravsik said that GAA is invited to develop its own plan to meet the previously outlined requirements.

Mr. Law said he really did not know what he was competing against and produced a basic ambulance service agreement drafted by the Town in 2005 for consideration by GAA. Mr. Law noted that GAA's concern then, and now, was that the Town refused to fund reimbursement shortfalls.

Nick DeLia, City of Groton Fire Chief, present in the audience, wanted to know whether this committee was requesting proposals at this time. Chairman Moravsik said no. Chief DeLia said that whenever the Town did request such proposals, he imagined that it would have to follow its own purchase and acquisition procedures. He also stated that whether a local emergency medical services plan is economically feasible depended greatly on the demographics of the PSA.

2015-0052    Poquonnock Bridge Fire District Issues

The intention of this referral item was to discuss R-1 services, which was already done above.

2015-0188    Distribution of PILOT Funds for State Owned Property

2015-0201    PILOT Funds for State and Town Owned Property – Methodology and Future Distribution

Referrals 2015-0188 and 2015-0201 were discussed together. Chairman Moravsik briefly reviewed previously circulated to the committee concerning the history of Groton's distribution of state PILOT funds, the method adopted, and changes made since then. It was moved by Joe de la Cruz and second by Dean Antipas that the question of whether and how to modify the distribution of state PILOT funds to the fire districts be referred to the Town Council Committee of the Whole.

6.      Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List

No other referral items were raised.

7.      OTHER BUSINESS

Ed Quinlan of the Center Groton Fire District noted that rumors were circulating about the Center Groton and West Pleasant Valley fire districts being folded into the Poquonnock Bridge Fire District. The chair noted that there was no such proposal and that the rumors were likely based on idle conversation taken out of context.

8.      ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.